

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 EB-08 H-01 COME-00 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 DODE-00 L-03 PM-05
SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 /065 W
-----013244 211756Z /72
O 211712Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 710

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: BDIS, HO
SUBJ: CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN THE DEL WEBB CASE

REF: (A) STATE 155645, (B) TEGUCIGALPA 2944, (C) TEGUCIGALPA
2948

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UMMARY: IN ACCORDANCE WITH REF A I CALLED ON FONMIN PALMA
GALVEZ ON JUNE 20 TO INFORM HIM OF INTENTIONS OF INTERESTED CON-
GRESSMEN TO RAISE IN THE CONTEXT OF DEBATE ON AID APPROPRIATIONS
HONDURAS' ALLEGED INACTION ON THE DEL WEBB CLAIM AND TO RESTRICT
AID TO HONDURAS UNLESS IT INDICATES SOONEST THAT IT IS SERIOUSLY
CONSIDERING THE CLAIM.

PALMA GALVEZ WAS RECEPTIVE AND PROMISED AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE.
THE FOREIGN MINISTER CALLED SHORTLY AFTER OUR MEETING TO RELAY
A REPORT FROM THE MINISTER OF FINANCE WHICH INDICATES THAT THE
GOH HAS BEEN ACTING ON THE CLAIM AND THAT A FURTHER RESPONSE
WILL BE FORTHCOMING SOON. I TRUST THAT THIS EVIDENCE OF ACTION,
INTER ALIA, WILL ENABLE THE DEPARTMENT TO AVERT THREATENED
ACTION BY CERTAIN CONGRESSMEN. END SUMMARY

1. IN MY CALL ON HONDURAS' FOREIGN MINISTER ROBERTO PALMA
GALVEZ ON JUNE 20 (REFTEL B) I INFORMED HIM OF THE INTENSIFI-
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CATION OF CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN THIS CASE AND OF THE PLANS
OF CERTAIN CONGRESSMEN TO INTERJECT THIS LONG-STANDING CLAIM
INTO IMMINENT CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE ON ECONOMIC AND MILITARY
ASSISTANCE APPROPRIATIONS, AS REPORTED TO THE EMBASSY IN REFTL

A. I STRESSED
IN BOTH MY ORAL PRESENTATION AND AN AIDE-MEMOIR

WHICH I LEFT WITH HIM (REFTEL :) THAT THE EMBASSY WAS NOT ATTEMPTING TO EXERT PRESSURE FOR A FAVORABLE OUTCOME BUT, RATHER, TO RELATE CONCERN OVER DELAY IN RESOLVING THE CLAIM. AFTER DESCRIBING CONGRESSMAN RUDD'S INTENTIONS (PARA 3 REFTTEL A) I POINTED OUT THE CLEAR DESIRABILITY OF AN INTERIM GOH RESPONSE BEFORE JUNE 22 AND FOR EITHER A DECISION OR A FURTHER RESPONSE WITHIN TWO WEEKS ADVISING GOH PROGRESS IN CONSIDERING THE CLAIM AND INDICATING WHEN A DECISION CAN BE EXPECTED.

2. PALMA GALVEZ WAS HIGHLY RECEPTIVE AND EXPRESSED APPARENTLY SINCER APPRECIATION FOR, IN HIS WORDS, MY MOTIVATION IN CONNECTION WITH THIS CASE, OF DEEP CONCERN OVER THE CONSEQUENCES FOR HONDURAS' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE EVENT THAT THE CONGRESSMEN WERE ABLE TO CARRY OUT THEIR THREATS TO IMPEDE THE FUNDING OF ASSISTANCE. AT THE MINISTER'S REQUEST, THE EMBASSY ECONOFF WHO ACCOMPANIED ME, BRIEFLY OUTLINED DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE. PALMA GALVEZ ASSURED ME THAT HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY CONFER WITH THE MINISTER OF FINANCE IN ORDER TO INFORM HIM OF THE IMPENDING CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS AND TO OBTAIN A TIMELY REPORT ON THE STATUS OF THAT MINISTRY'S ACTION. HE WAS EQUALLY RESPONSIVE TO THE NEED FOR AN EARLY AND DEFINITIVE RESOLUTION OF THE CLAIM.

3. ONLY MINUTES AFTER MY RETURN TO THE EMBASSY, MINISTER PALMA ADVISED ME BY TELEPHONE THAT HE HAD JUST APPRISED THE FINANCE MINISTER OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE AND HAD OBTAINED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE FOLLOWING REPORT ON ITS STATUS. THE DEL WEBB REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF ITS CLAIM HAS SINCE SUBMISSION IN DECEMBER 1977 BEEN REVIEWED, SUCCESSIVELY, BY THE REVENUE, BUDGET AND LEGAL DEPARTMENTS OF THE FINANCE MINISTRY. THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT HAS NOT YET COMPLETED ITS REVEIW. THE MINISTER CALLED FOR EARLY JUNE 21, A MEETING OF PERSONNEL CONCERNED, THE RESULTS OF WHICH HE HOPES TO CONVEY BY NOON JUNE 21.

4. WHILE I WAS INFORMING DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHELTON OF MY CALL ON FONMIN PALMA, THE ECONOFF WAS SIMILARLY INFORMING MR. JOHN BYRNE OF DEL WEBB. WITH THIS EVIDENCE OF GOH SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF THE COMPANY'S CLAIM AND GIVEN THE RISK THAT CONGRESSMAN RUDD'S ACTION COULD TORPEDO A SETTLEMENT IF IN FACT IS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE GOH, I TRUST THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL BE ABLE TO DISSUADE THE CONGRESSMEN FROM INSERTING TO CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JUNE 22 A HISTORY OF GOH ALLEGED UNRESPONSIVENESS. MR. BYRNE SEEMED SATISFIED, FOR NOW, THAT HIS EFFORTS TO STEP UP THE TEMPO AND SERIOUSNESS OF GOH CONSIDERATION HAVE PRODUCED DESIRED EFFECTS.

5. I WILL FOLLOW UP AND PROMPTLY REPORT RESULTS OF THE FINANCE MINISTRY MEETING (PARA 3) JUNE 21 AND WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR

TIMELY ACTION. IN THIS RESPECT, I THINK IT IMPORTANT THAT THE DEPARTMENT BE REMINDED OF COUNTRY TEAM'S EXPERIENCE THAT GOH, FOR ONE GOOD REASON OR ANOTHER, OFO N IS NOT ABLE TO MEET DEAD-LINES, AND THAT RESULTS OF MINISTRY OF FINANCE MEETING MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE BY NOON JUNE 21, BUT RATHER IN A FEW DAYS. IF, IN FACT, THN RESULTS OF THIS MEETING ARE NOT AVAILABLE BEFORE JUNE 22, THIS SHOULD NOT ALTER OUR VIEW THAT CONGRESSMAN RUDD'S PROPOSED ACTION WOULD BE MOST INOPPORTUNE.

JARAMILLO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TEGUCIO2952
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780259-0179
Format: TEL
From: TEGUCIGALPA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780633/aaaabcrk.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 95263984-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 155645, 78 TEGUCIGALPA 2944, 78 TEGUCIGALPA 1978
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2256934
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN THE DEL WEBB CASE
TAGS: BDIS, HO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/95263984-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014